

Assault On Referees

Assaults do happen, even to experienced referees. If such assaults are to be stamped out, referees must follow a sensible and consistent course of action that will enable the State Association to punish offenders, and discourage potential offenders from acts of violence. A referee should react to an assault in a manner that will permit administration and enforcement agencies to do their job.

“Misconduct Toward Game Officials” is covered under Federation Policy 531-9. Please refer to that in this book in the section titled “United States Soccer Federation Rules Pertaining to Referees”.

If an assault occurs:

- 1. Never strike back** if such action can possibly be avoided. Defend yourself as passively as possible. When a referee is struck, the majority of players and bystanders are automatically sympathetic towards him, even if they were previously hostile. If the referee chooses to “slug it out,” he stands to lose the support and calming influence of these people. He may also prejudice his own legal position.
- 2. Try to remain calm and avoid undue signs of stress.** Maintain a standard of behavior befitting a professional referee. Remember that police officers are assaulted frequently, yet they react in as controlled a manner as the situation permits, drawing on their resources of self-control to get to the top of the threatening situation.
- 3. Get the details down on paper** (when things are under control).
 - A. Note the player's number and obtain his name from the team captain or coach if necessary.
 - B. Send him off if possible. If not, advise the captain of your decision, and be prepared to abandon the game if the player is not removed completely from the scene.
- 4. Obtain witnesses.** Consult your assistant referees, if any, or any unattached bystanders. Get names and telephone numbers. Use other players only as a last resort. Do not be concerned about holding up the game; common assault is a criminal offense and must be treated seriously. Make notes to be sure that your subsequent report is accurate. After the game, discuss the incident with your witnesses; this is quite legal as no charges have been laid at this stage. Get your facts right.
- 5. Seek medical attention if you are injured.** Go to the nearest hospital emergency room or trauma clinic. The medical personnel will treat any injuries, and document them for the record.
- 6. Upon returning home after the game, contact by telephone the President of the State Association and the State Referee Administrator.** Those individuals will then be aware of the incident, and will be in a position to give support and advice.

- 7. Official notification of the incident.** The referee, shall, by the next “business day” (Monday, if the incident took place on a weekend), notify the SRA and the State President, or his designee, and follow up with a complete written report. A copy should go to the SRA, the state presidents and to the league or local association.
- 8. Write a report.** The report of misconduct toward the game official must be professional, precise, informative, not too brief, not too long, and above all, accurate. The report should be accompanied by written reports from the assistant referees (if used) and by copies of any other game misconduct reports sent to the league under whose jurisdiction the match was played. If you are medically treated for injury, that should also be noted.
- 9. Procedure for report transmittal.** The written reports are sent within 48 hours to the State President or his designee, and a copy to the SRA, the league or local association. For tournaments or special events, the tournament director/event coordinator must be notified, in writing, on the day of the incident, and the referee’s home state SRA (if out of state) within 10 days.
- 10. Report terms and references:** Refer to Policy 531-10, Section 1.
- 11. In the event that the assault is serious enough** for you to consider filing civil action with the local authorities, you do have that right. Please inform the State President of your intent to do so.